

**THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE  
PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:**

- 5     1. A seal assembly for a reciprocating shaft, comprising:  
      a body having a bore;  
      a shaft adapted to move reciprocally within the body  
      between an extended position extending from the body and a  
      retracted position retracted within the body;
- 10       at least one first circumferential seal positioned in  
      the body and circumscribing the shaft, the shaft having a  
      first seal travel area which is in contact with the first  
      seal during axial reciprocating movement of the shaft, at  
15       least a portion of the first seal travel area extending  
      from the body where it is exposed to contaminants when the  
      shaft is in the extended position;
- at least one second circumferential seal positioned in  
      the body and circumscribing the shaft in axially spaced  
      relation to the first circumferential seal, the shaft
- 20       having a second seal travel area which is in contact with  
      the second seal during axial reciprocating movement of the  
      shaft, the second seal area remaining sheltered within the  
      body even when the shaft is in the extended position; and
- the first seal travel area and the second seal travel
- 25       area being axially spaced separate and distinct areas on  
      the shaft, such that damage to the exposed portion of the  
      first seal travel area leading to a failure of the at least  
      one first circumferential seal does not lead to failure of  
      the at least one second circumferential seal, as the second
- 30       circumferential seal engages the second seal travel area  
      which is separate and distinct from the first seal travel  
      area.
2. The seal assembly as defined in Claim 1, wherein the
- 35       shaft is a ram shaft of a blow out preventer.